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Security Information

8 July 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Supervisors and Certifying Officers

SUBJECT : Completed Staff Work

1. There is a tendency on the part of all of us to refer problems in an incomplete, unanalyzed form to our supervisors for solution. The more difficult the problem, the more frequently this occurs. In a large organization such as this, the volume and complexity of the work require that staff work on any problem be completed before it is passed on to higher authority for approval or action.

2. Completed staff work may be defined as the study and analysis of a problem by the employee and the presentation of the problem and the recommended solution to his supervisor in such form that all that remains to be done on the part of the supervisor is to indicate his approval or disapproval of the course of action recommended.

3. The basic principle of completed staff work is that it is the responsibility of the person most familiar with the problem to analyze the problem, assemble the facts, and recommend a solution. Your supervisor should be expected to review the facts and recommendations and to make a final decision, but he should not be depended upon to analyze the problem, to assemble the facts, or to organize or to rewrite the material.

4. The concept of completed staff work does not, of course, preclude preliminary consultations between you and your supervisor. The preliminary consultations may be oral, by memorandum, in rough draft, or on the staff study form prescribed by Agency Regulations (Reference CIA Regulation 25X1A). But regardless of the method of presentation and regardless of whether it is a preliminary or final presentation, you should have analyzed the problem, have the pertinent facts at hand, and have a proposed conclusion or recommendation to offer. All relevant facts available to you, including those which may detract from as well as those which support your argument, must be presented. Your supervisor should never be placed in the position of being required to make a decision from incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading facts.

5. A useful tool in the presentation of your ideas is the staff study form prescribed by CIA Regulation 25X1A. This form, which is mandatory in connection with presenting problems to the Director, may also be used by you as a guide in thinking through any problem. The organization of your material in the form indicated (1. Problem, 2. Assumptions, 3. Facts Bearing on the Problem, 4. Discussion, 5. Conclusions, and 6. Recommendations) will serve to clarify your thinking, will aid in the presentation of the problem to your supervisor, and will simplify the preparation of a formal staff study should one prove necessary.

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6. Adherence to the completed staff work concept, including the use of the staff study form where applicable, will result in benefits to you, the employee, to your supervisor, and to the Agency:

a. The orderly organization of material will frequently suggest to you the solution to your problem. A conference with your supervisor may prove to be unnecessary, or the conference, if still necessary, will be reduced to a brief discussion, thus saving your time and the time of your supervisor for other important matters.

b. Proper and complete assembly of material will save the time of your supervisor by preventing his having to assemble additional facts or rewriting or reorganizing the material.

c. Completeness of presentation will protect your supervisor from making decisions on the basis of inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information.

d. If you have a suggestion to make, a clear presentation of the material will make its acceptance more likely.


e. If the material is one involving procedures, a procedure drafted by you will probably be more pertinent and easier for you to follow than one drafted by your supervisor who is less familiar with the details of your problem.

7. When you have finished your completed staff work, the final tests are these:

a. If this is an oral presentation, can your supervisor give a simple "yes" or "no" answer without further questioning or discussion?

b. If this is a memorandum, dispatch, or staff study, would you, as the supervisor, be willing to sign the paper you have prepared and to stake your professional reputation on its being right?

c. If the answer in either case is negative, the problem must be further considered. It is not yet completed staff work.

  
E. R. SAUNDERS  
Comptroller

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